

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the continued review of the presented claims in view of the prior art. Claims 18 and 19 remain in the application. Claims 20 and 21 have been cancelled. The features of claim 20 have been added to claim 18 by amendment. Additionally, claim 18 has been amended to clarify the direction of removal of part product groups from the group stream.

Within the final Office action of June 27, 2007, claims 18-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,866,910 to Reist (hereinafter Reist '910) in view of U.S. Patent 5,727,781 to Muller (hereinafter Muller). Additionally, claims 18 -24 were rejected as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 4,684,118 to Boss (hereinafter Boss) in view of Muller and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,270,076 to Reist (hereinafter Reist '076). For the following reasons, the rejections are believed to be inapplicable to the remaining amended claim 18 and claim 19 that depends therefrom.

Even if the references were combined in the manners suggested by the Examiner, they do not teach or suggest the following step from claim 18:

successively separating from the front end of the restored row (2) *part product groups* (7) by gripping, *with a gripper*, each part product group from said common side of the row in the range (10) of said aligned edges and *removing it from the head end of the row in a third direction (F) substantially perpendicular to the second direction (E) and parallel to plane of the flat portion of the products*

Note, the second direction (E) is the direction in which the wound up row is unwound and the part product groups comprise several part products which have an aligned edge that is parallel to the direction of the longitudinal direction of the part

product group row.

References

In contrast to the claimed method step above, Reist '910 (see Fig. 4) teaches paying out products from a roll 28 and then moving them in a direction transverse to the paid out row, but movement in the transverse direction is accomplished by conveyors, not grippers. Additionally, what is being moved is not a product part group of different types of part products, but rather individual products. Thus, because there is no part product group, there is no alignment of edges within the group and there is no gripping along such and aligned edge. As clearly stated in columns 5, lines 3 to 24 and as illustrated in Figs. 1 and 4 of Reist '910, the supply conveyors A, B, C, which *supply the products* to be wound to form a roll, are gripper conveyors, whereas the infeed paths 15, 16, 17, 18 which remove the unwound row from the roll are conveyor belts or bands, which are not able to grip. Furthermore, as clearly seen from Fig. 4, the products are not separated from the row, but the row is moved, intact, even if its direction is changed.

In contrast to this step of the claimed method, Muller teaches removal of product groups at an oblique angle relative to the conveying direction of the row of groups and the removal is effected by rollers, not grippers. Additionally, within Muller, the products in the groups do not have aligned edges that are parallel to the direction of conveyance of the group.

Boss teaches movement of items (not part product groups), after they are unwound and paid out from a rotor 15. The items move individually or in a scalloped form along conveyor 14 and fall into tray 8 where they accumulated and then moved away in a transverse direction. Because there are no part product groups, there are

no aligned edges amongst part products. Additionally, the products of Boss are not gripped by a gripper for separation from a common side of the row of in a range of aligned edges, as required.

Reist '076 teaches in Figure 9 a conveyor line having a reel that pays off articles layered on top of each other onto a conveyor. Articles are picked up by grippers at a changing location 21 and then further transported, still in a row format. However, the articles are not product groups and, thus, there are no aligned edges amongst part products in a part product group. Further the articles are not gripped and pulled off in a direction parallel to the plane of the flat portion of the articles. Rather, they are moved perpendicular (upwards) with respect to the plane of the flat portion. Lastly, the articles are not *separated* from the row, as the row remains intact.

Reist '953 teaches two conveyors running side by side, each being equipped with grippers. Products are gripped within the grippers on one of the conveyors (upper) and deposited onto the lower conveyor. Reist '953 doesn't disclose a group of part products, nor does it teach gripping along an aligned edge of such a group. Nor does Reist '953 teach removal in a direction that is transverse to the direction of motion and parallel to the flat surface of a part product group.

Reist '685 teaches removal of individual stitched products from a spindle using grippers. However, no removal of a part product group from a row of part product groups is taught. There is no edge where multiple part products are aligned, so the grippers of Reist '685 do not grip an individual product in the required location as mandated by the claim. Additionally, Reist '685 does not disclose a paid out row of products, so Reist '685 does not teach removal in a direction substantially

perpendicular to such a row.

Specific Rejections from Final Office Action

Regarding the individual rejections, the proposed combination of Reist '910 and Muller fails to teach separation of part product groups by gripping a group with a gripper, as required. Rather, Muller utilizes conveyors and Reist '910 also uses conveyors for separating. Within Reist '910 grippers are only used for depositing product, not separating product from a row. There is not teaching of the grippers in Reist '910 picking up or separating products from a paid out row.

Additionally, no part product groups are described as having aligned edges that are aligned in a direction parallel to the direction of the row. In Muller, where groups of products having different formats are taught, alignment within the group is skewed with respect to the direction of the row of groups. In Reist '910, groups of part products are not taught.

In response to the Examiner's comments within the Advisory Action, Applicant takes note of the Examiner's statement regarding the teachings of Muller. However, Applicant requests clarification of the Examiner's reference to Reist '910 (Reist II) as upon reviewing the cited portions, Applicant is unsure how this are meant to show the claimed method steps.

Additionally, Applicant believes that it would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Reist '910 and Muller because the results of such a combination are unexpected. It would be expected that after taking several part products and combining them into part product groups and then placing these groups into a row and attempting to roll them, that the individual part

products within the part product groups would not maintain their alignment and instead fall apart. But because within the claiming invention, there is particular edge alignment of the part products within the part product groups and with respect to the direction of the row, stability is surprisingly maintained, even when each part product group contains several part products.

Applicant believes that claims 18 and 19 are patentable over the Muller and Reist '910 references.

Regarding the proposed combination of Boss, Muller and Reist '076, the proposed combination fails to teach a group of part products that have an aligned edge parallel to the longitudinal direction of the row of part product groups. Boss and Reist '076 fail to teach part product groups and Muller teaches groups where any aligned edges are skewed with respect to the longitudinal direction of a row including the groups.

The proposed combination also fails to teach separation of part product groups by gripping a group with a gripper and pulling the part product group in a direction perpendicular to the direction the row is being paid out and parallel to the plane of the flat portion of the products within the group. Neither Boss nor Muller teach the use of grippers and although Reist '076 teaches gripper use, removal, as stated above, the products in Reist '076 are moved perpendicular (upwards) with respect to the plane of the flat portion of the product.

Applicant believes that claims 18 and 19 are patentable over the Boss, Muller and Reist '076 references.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 18-0160, our Order No. FRR-15710.

Respectfully submitted,

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